SHRI RAM CHAUHAN): (a) The stocks of foodgrains and sugar strictly conforming to the specifications laid down by the Government of India are issued by the FCI to the State Governments or their authorised representatives for distribution under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) through Fair Price Shops (FPS). The representatives of the state Governments are allowed to inspect the quality of foodgrains before lifting from FCI godowns.

(b) No, Sir.

However, with a view to improve the quality of foodgrains being distributed through PDS, the following steps have been taken:

(i) The specifications of rice during current kharif marketing season (1999-2000) have been tightened.

(ii) Instructions have been issued to all state Governments that officers not below the rank of Inspector should be deputed for joint inspection of foodgrain stocks before lifting from FCI godowns.

Policy for the Picking Sandstones

*914. SHRI MANOHAR KANT DHYANI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1010, given in Rajya Sabha on the 10th December, 1999 and state:

(a) whether any policy would be framed by the Centre for picking (Tipan) of sandstones dropped by various hilly rivers of more than three hundred kilometers length in the mountainous regions; and

(b) whether same kind of pointing would be provided in these mountainous areas, as in foothill areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) No, Sir. There is already provision in the Forest

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(Conservation) Act, 1980 Rules and Guidelines for picking of sandstones etc. from the river beds located in the forest areas; however their removal would require prior approval of the Central Government under the Act.

(b) The prior approval of Central Government under section-2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is required for picking of sandstones etc. from the river beds located in hills as well as plain (foothills) forest areas.

Afforestation programme in Orissa

915. DR. M.N. DAS: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have undertaken large-scale afforestation programme in the ten coastal districts of Orissa after the recent super-cyclone in view of the devastation caused to environment and forests; and

(b) if so, what are the measures undertaken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Under the centrally sponsored Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, seven new projects have been sanctioned during 1999-2000 for taking up afforestation activities in the cyclone affected districts of Orissa at a total cost of Rs. 1061.72 lakhs for the Ninth Plan Period. Assistance of Rs. 46.50 lakhs has also been provided in the current financial year under the Conservation and Management of Mangroves and Coral Reefs Scheme of the Ministry for intensive conservation and management of 200 ha. of mangroves in Mahanadi and 150 ha. in Bhitarkanika including protection and eco-development activities.